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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 002136

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PARIS FOR ZEYA; LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: SARG DIVIDED ON REACTION TO BRAMMERTZ; TILT
TOWARDS IRAN SEEN AS HARDENING INTERNAL POLICIES

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-----ZFR WILL BE RETRANSMITTED UNDER NEW MRN/MCNS ZFR-----

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his operating environment as Syria has tilted towards Iran.
That shift has "hardened everything."

17. (C) Two political players who have profited from that shift are senior security officer Mohammed Nassif Khairbek and VP Farouk al-Shara'a, noted al-Taki. (Comment: We have received contradictory reports about how strongly Khairbek tried -- and apparently failed -- to undo Asad's appointment of him as an advisor to Shara'a in his new capacity as Vice President.) Khairbek has benefited, said al-Taki, largely because two issues he has traditionally handled, Iran and Hizballah, are being given heightened prominence as a result of Syria's more confrontational posture. Khairbek has also buttressed Shara'a's influence. While initially the former FM was not viewed as someone who could maintain his influence as a vice president, Khairbek's security service "apparatus" and "his issues" are seen as enhancing Shara'a's influence, assessed al-Taki. He noted that Asad had recently asked current FM Mu'allim to "consult" with Shara'a on foreign policy issues. Mu'allim had replied that he "could not take orders from Shara'a" but did not explicitly refuse to consult, al-Taki intimated.

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